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RESEARCH

Reason And Revelation: Maimonides, The Jewish Averroists and Spinoza

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The relationship between Reason and Revelation has traditionally been understood as that of philosophy to religion. Medieval thought, Christian, Muslim, and Jewish, in different ways, sought to establish harmony between these two fields, as did Maimonides in particular. However, after Maimonides, and following the development of Averroism and the theory of double truth, several Jewish philosophers set out to reformulate the relationship between Reason and Revelation. This article analyzes the evolution of these relations and the impact they had on the formation of Spinozism and on its project of a radical break between philosophy and religion.

1. Introduction

Since Tertullian's (160–240) question, "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem' (Tertullian 2024, VII:VII), the problem of harmony between Reason (symbolized by Athens) and Revelation (symbolized by Jerusalem) has been at the center of debate among theologians and philosophers. For the former, Revelation remains intelligible, while for the latter, it is not (Gilson 1938, 69). However, for the philosophers of the Middle Ages, Christians, Muslims, and Jews, and in different ways, harmony between Reason and Revelation remained possible. Against such a consensus, Spinoza sought to establish the break between philosophy and religion by positing that "Scripture must not be adapted to reason, nor reason to Scripture" (*quod nec Scriptura rationi, nec ratio Scripturae accommodanda sit*) (Spinoza 1925, IV, 185). The opposition between Athens and Jerusalem was taken up again in the twentieth century, first by Lev Shestov, then by Leo Strauss, but in opposite ways.

For Shestov, referring to Spinoza, Revelation is only a myth and cannot be true (Shestov 1966, 352), whereas for Strauss, it is first necessary to "avoid the compulsion to make an advance decision in favor of Athens against Jerusalem" (Leo Strauss 1997, 382). Strauss also emphasizes that philosophy has never refuted revelation. (Leo Strauss 1997, 131). In this article, I will try to show how the medieval conception of the unity of Reason and Revelation evolved, first of all towards a separation between these two notions, each posited as true in its specific field. Particularly with Spinoza, these notions ended up being radically opposed. As a result, he attributed to religion

a purely moral value, which was nevertheless posited as being necessary for social cohesion. My analysis of such an evolution will focus first on Maimonidean thought, then on the post-Maimonidean Jewish philosophers influenced by Averroism, and finally on Spinoza's relationship to Averroism and his rejection of Revelation.

2. Maimonides and the Question of Certainty

Maimonides specifies that the *Guide for the Perplexed* is addressed to one who has studied "*philosophy (shemitpalsef)*, and who has acquired true sciences, but who, believing in religious things (*ma'amym bedevarym ha-torayym*), remains troubled (*navuk*) about their meaning, whose obscure names (*ha-shemot ha-mesupaqym*) and allegories (*mashalym*) lead to uncertainty (*ha-mevukah*)" (Maimonides 1977, I:1). Maimonides' project of reducing the distance between philosophy and religion, by responding to the objections that maintain this distance, is the opposite of that developed by Spinoza, which was precisely to found a complete break between these two domains.

Maimonides emphasizes that the true prophets have unmistakable speculative perceptions, because when the divine intellect (*ha-sekel ha-'Elohy*) joins man, the latter then realizes his essence of being "in the image (*beçelem*) of God and in his likeness (*bedemuto)* (*Genesis*, I, 26)" (Maimonides 1977, I:1, 18). He specifies that the faculty of divination exists in all men; however, by their intellect alone, they cannot apprehend the unmistakable speculative perceptions (*ha*ṣ*agot 'iyunyot bly* ṣ*afeq*) that the prophet is capable of perceiving (Maimonides 1977, II, 38, 251).

The Agent Intellect (*ha-sekel ha-po'el*) is a means by which the human intellect can move from power to action (*min ha-koa*ḥ *'el ha-po'al*) to realize these perceptions (Maimonides 1977, II, 4, 173). As I will explain later, from the point of view, which has been described as exoteric (writing for the masses), only the prophets are able to really know incorporeal beings, because the nature of their cognition is fundamentally different from that of the philosophers (Pines 1979, 90). However, from an esoteric point of view (writing for the elite), Maimonides maintains that Scripture, while representing the supreme authority over speculative truths, always remains in harmony with reason; a thesis that Spinoza could not accept (Kreisel 2001, 572).

According to Maimonides, the biblical themes of the Account of the Creation (*Ma'asey Ber'eshyt*) and the Account of the Chariot (*Ma'asey Merkabah*), respectively, refer to the physical sciences (*mad'aye ha-tev'a*) and the divine or metaphysical science (*mad'aye ha-'Elohut*). The subjects concerning these two domains are presented, in an esoteric way, by allegories (Maimonides 1987, *Hilkot* Yesodey ha-Torah II:10–11, IV:10; Maimonides 1964, Hagigah II:1, I:8). Maimonides included them in what he calls the "bodies of the Torah" (*gufey Torah*) (Maimonides 1987, *Hilkot 'Avodah*

Zarah II:5; Kellner 1997, 92–93). As a result, he was able to understand that physics and metaphysics constitute, for him, the very roots of the Torah (Twersky 1980, 361). However, such an opinion has been challenged, notably by R. Nissim Gyrondy (1290–1376), R. Hasdai Crescas (1340–1410/1411), and by R. Itshaq Abarbanel (1437–15081509/). R. Nissim Gyrondy stressed that natural sciences and metaphysics are not esoteric since they are widely studied among many people. On the other hand, what the Tradition designates as the Account of Creation and the Account of the Chariot concern, respectively, the essence of things (literally their form: *miçad ha-çurah*), transmitted only to the prophets (*nimsar lanevy'im*), and the separate Intelligibles (*sekalym ha-nivdalym*) (Nissim 1959, 3b–4a).

According to R. Hasdai Crescas, the secrets related to the Account of Creation and the Account of the Chariot can in no way be drawn by metaphysical reflection (*bemah she'ahar devar mizeh*) because the latter, like physics itself, remains purely exoteric. In this sense, it can be recalled what the Sages of the *Talmud* prescribed concerning the Accounts of Creation and the Chariot, which must not be explained, for the first, to two persons, and for the second to one person, unless he is a wise man who is able to understand by his own intelligence (*'el'a 'im ken hayah hakam u-mevym mida'ato*) (*Talmud Babylon* 1994, *Hagygah* 11b). Indeed, the expression Account of Creation must be understood in the literal sense (*kepshuto*), and it refers to the secret of the Explicit Name (*Shem ha-Mefurash*). The Account of the Chariot concerns both what is possible to conceive of as divine actions from the higher realities (ha-'elyonym) and the processes (hishtalshelut) that connect the material world with the world of the intellects (Crescas 1990, IV, 10, 407–409). R. Itshaq Abrabanel, while maintaining the harmony advocated by Maimonides between Reason and Torah (Lawee 2005, 149; Cohen-Skalli 2021, 190–191), added that prophecies, like those of Ezekiel, could not be perceived by philosophical means, and that they certainly could not be put on the same level as the natural sciences (Abrabanel 1960, III, 71).

Concerning sensible knowledge, Maimonides has outlined an epistemology based on belief, which can itself lead to certainty. Belief, in general, consists in admitting as true what has been conceived in the mind, provided that the object of this belief is attested as being external to the mind (*mihuç lamahshavah*). When one associates with the conviction that the opposite of this belief is absolutely impossible (*l'o ytaken hypuk ha-da'at*), then one arrives at certainty or exactness (*yheyh zeh nakon*) (Maimonides 1977, I:50, 75; Sadik 2024, 4–9). This is to be distinguished from proofs that only approach to demonstration (*ber'ayot ha-qrovot lihyot hokahah*) (Maimonides 1977, II, 19, 204), such as the cosmological argument about the existence of God, even if this argument proves that He necessarily exists (*r'ayah hihletyt 'al meçy'ut Ha-Shem*) (Maimonides 1977, II, 19, 204). Although these proofs cannot entirely dispel all doubts, for they proceed from effects to causes and not in a reverse way, they nevertheless provide a virtual certainty (Manekin

2012, 80). In this sense, for Maimonides, man's intellectual approach to grasping the intelligible implies an epistemological attitude that could be described as skeptical. Man's ability to know the supralunar world is a matter of demonstrations that remain profoundly limited, whereas his cognitive certainty can only be applied to the realm he can be known (*bemah she 'efshar le-'adam leasygo*), that is, only the material world (Maimonides 1977, I:32, 48; J. Stern 2005, 117). As Ludwig Wittgenstein would point out, in a different epistemological context, the very possibility of doubt presupposes certainty (Wittgenstein 1969, § 115, 125). Thus, with regard to the intelligible, according to Maimonides, only Revelation can guarantee a certainty that Reason remains unable to obtain, because the divine intellect pours out (*shef'a ha-sekel ha-'Eloh̲y*) only on the true prophet (*'asher hu' navy' be'emet*) (Maimonides 1977, II, 38, 252). In this sense, the *Talmud* specified that the "certain" (*ha-wad'ay*) is one of the attributes of God (*Talmud Babylon* 1994, *Berak̲ot*, 33b).

3. The Consubstantial Unity Between Reason and Revelation

Al-Fārābī (870–950) posited that Revelation consists of two complementary aspects: theoretical and practical, and he stressed that, without asserting his superiority, the prophet remains capable of receiving Revelation (Al-Fārābī 1973, 36). According to Avicenna (980–1037), the term prophet describes the individual who achieves intellectual excellence, which can then make him capable of intuitions superior to the mere faculty of reasoning (Avicenna 1972, 155). He adds, in relation to Al-Fārābī, that the degree of inspiration (*ilhām*) remains lower than that of prophecy (*wahy*) (Rahman 1979, 36). But unlike Al-Fārābī, Avicenna includes in the category of prophecy the immediate perception of scientific knowledge acquired independently of usual cognitive procedures (Davidson 1992, 123). All these philosophers sought, on the one hand, to unify philosophy and Revelation, and on the other hand, to show the primacy of the latter over the former.

In line with the Muslim conception of prophecy, R. Yehuda Ha-Levi (1075–1141) emphasizes that the intellect has two differentiated functions which, together, make it possible to apprehend intelligible forms: divine inspiration and acquisition (Ha-Levi 1880, V, 12, 25a). He emphasizes that this last function, isolated from the first, concerns properly philosophical truth, which is most of the time based on arguments of authority, often allowing philosophers to avoid engaging in a meticulous theoretical examination. As a result, they rarely agree with each other, and therefore the knowledge they arrive at is always inferior to the truths professed by transmission and reception, such as are found, for example, in the *Sefer Yezyrah* (Ha-Levi 1880, V, 14, 37a; Kalisch 1877. As R. Its̲haq Abrabanel points out, with regard to the verse of *Exodus*, 14:30, "Israel saw (*wa-yar'*) the mighty hand that the Tetragrammaton had directed against Egypt. And the people feared the Tetragrammaton, and they believed (*wa-y'amynu*) in the Tetragrammaton and in Moses His servant." In addition to deliverance from

the Egyptian yoke by means of a miracle observed by all the people, this verse comes to teach us the knowledge of God (*yedy'at ha-'El*) related to this lived experience, as well as the truthful ways of His Providence (*darkey ha-'amytot behashgaḥat Ha-Shem*) (Abrabanel 1979, II, 121–122).

Let us recall that Maimonides defines belief in relation to knowledge (*yedy'ah*), and he distinguishes between its three essential forms. In his letter to the Elders of Marseille, he recalls the criteria capable of differentiating between true beliefs and those that are false. He first describes the beliefs related to scientific evidence, such as those resulting from calculus, geometry, or astronomy, the results of which remain indisputable and which Maimonides himself widely practiced (Rosner and Kottek 1993). He then evokes the beliefs related to bodily sensations, which vary according to the individual, the moments when these sensations are felt, and which, therefore, have no objective value. Finally, he details the beliefs transmitted by the prophets, which are still unmistakable. Maimonides also points out that any belief from any source other than those he has just enumerated must be disqualified, and he relates the essence of such a belief to the maxim of King Solomon (*Proverbs*, 14:15): "The fool will believe all things" (*Pety y'amyn lekol davar*) (Maimonides 1859, III, 25). In his *Treatise on Logic*, Maimonides adds a fourth type of belief: those whose propositions, limited to the domain of ethics, are known to be probable or plausible (*ha-mefursamot*) (Maimonides 2011, 46; Sadik 2021, 1–15).

However, Maimonides pointed out the dangers of revealing the divine or metaphysical science (*mad'ay 'elohut*) to those whose intellect is not sufficiently prepared to understand its real nature, for this science expresses the hidden meaning of prophetic allegories (*ha-mashalym ha-nevu'yym*) (Maimonides 1977, I:33, 49). Such a remark concerning the esoteric nature of divine science has been systematized by commentators on Maimonides, beginning with the first Hebrew translator of *the Guide of the Perplexed*, R. Samuel Ibn Tibbon (11501230–1160/) (Ravitzky 1981, 88). This opinion was later developed, notably by Leo Strauss (L. Strauss 1952, 36), Shlomo Pines (Pines 1963, 18; 1979, 82–109; Harvey 2008, 213–235),[1] and Sara Klein-Braslavy (Klein-Braslavy 2006, 137–164).

Spinoza seems to have taken note of this distinction between the esoteric and exoteric levels, as designating philosophy and religion, respectively. Even if it has been possible to identify a profoundly esoteric dimension in Spinozism, positing the necessity of God *versus* His traditional merciful and exoteric

1 In fact, Shlomo Pines has identified four levels of reading in the *Guide*: the first inspired by the theology of the Kalam, the second in accordance with Aristotelianism, the third presenting a critical epistemology, and the fourth, particularly mystical and having integrated Sufi elements. (Pines 1979, 82–109; Harvey 2008, 213–235). In correspondence, Shalom Sadik has pointed out that both Leo Strauss and Shlomo Pines have changed their opinions on the question of the relationship between esotericism and the exoterism of Maimonides, but such a change has taken place in the opposite direction. Leon Strauss initially defended an exoteric reading and then turned to an esoteric reading, while Shlomo Pines initially adopted an esoteric perspective and ended up supporting a skeptical attitude.

characteristics (Bagley 1996, 387–416), nevertheless Spinoza openly sought to cancel such a distinction in order to deny any rational content to Revelation (Kreisel 2015, 14–15). His aim was to preserve only the moral features of religion, which is always necessary to preserve the obedience of the people (Spinoza 1925, IV, 75). He thought that this would put an end to the harmony between philosophy and Revelation, as it had been developed by the Arab philosophers, influenced by Plato, Aristotle (Mahdi 1962), and Philo of Alexandria (Rahman 1979, 31), and then taken up by R. Yehuda Ha-Levi and Maimonides.

Averroism and the Opposition Between the Via Prophetica and the Via Rationis

The internal debates of Medieval Jewish thought, concerning the relationship between philosophy and religion, have their origins in Muslim and Jewish authors of the ninth century. Thus, Ibn al-Rawandi (Persian theologian, 827–911) developed what has been interpreted as a certain skepticism towards Islam; Hiwi al-Balhi (a Jewish author of the ninth century) criticized the coherence of the biblical texts (Stroumsa 1999, 219–223). Abū Hāmid Muhammad Al-Ghazali (1058–1111) developed a systematic opposition to Aristotelianism (Al Ghazālī 2000; Stroumsa 2009, 39–59). This opposition was particularly concerned with the questions of the origin of the world, the immortality of the soul, and the divine knowledge of individuals; subjects for which Al-Ghazali advocated doubt, because human reason cannot reach the supersensible domain (al-Ghazall 1980, 53, 144; Rayan 2004, 162–173). In contrast to Averroes, Ibn Rushd (1126–1198), emphasizes that such a doubt does not take into account the complexity of the laws that govern both the sublunar and the supralunar worlds, but which it is still possible to know (Averroes 1954, 382).

Let's recall that Averroism exerted a great influence on the Jewish philosophers of the Middle Ages (Ivry 1973, 321–327). It was introduced into Europe between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries by the Hebrew translations of the works of Averroes, from which the Latin translations were made (Renan 1866, 180–199). All of these translations represented a real bridge between ancient philosophy and the new ideas specific to the Renaissance (Ivry 1983, 323). It should be remembered that Averroes' work *Fasl al-Maqual*, which distinguished between religion and philosophy, has been translated into Hebrew several times, notably by R. Jacob ben Makhir Ibn Tibbon (1236–1304) and R. Todros Todrosi (born in 1313).[2] Similarly,

2 An English commentary on this work of Averroes was published by N. Golb, together with the establishment of the Hebrew text, according to different versions (Golb 1956, 91–113). On the question of specifically Jewish criticisms of Averroism, we refer to R. Haliva's study (Haliva 2018, 130–145).

R. Eliah Delmedigo (1458–1493), at the request of Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494), had translated several other Averroist texts into Latin (Gutman 1927, 192–208).

Averroes, while affirming that philosophy is the companion of religion and its "foster-sister" (Rehman 1921, 58), also specified that, when the speculative demonstration leads to a conclusion that is at odds with the Divine Law, the external (philosophical) interpretation must always conform to it (Averroes 2018, 21–22; Hübsch 1882, 55–563; Leibniz 1985, 75–76). Along the same lines, R. Eliah Delmedigo did not see any fundamental opposition between philosophy and religion (E. Delmedigo 1984, 76; Fraenkel et al. 2003, 34)[3] because the latter is based on an infallible knowledge transmitted by the prophetic tradition. It then always takes precedence over philosophy, provided that it does not encounter any logical contradiction, which would then be a sign of a misinterpretation of religious texts (Bland 1995, 6).[4]

In order to avoid the dangers of an extreme Averroist dichotomy between the philosophical and the religious approach, R. Eliah Delmedigo sought to determine the status of illogical beliefs, to avoid two types of pitfalls, one of a rational order and the other of a fideistic order. He thus emphasizes, on the one hand, that if reason warns us not to adhere to apparently absurd beliefs, its use out of context also risks, as Spinoza will do, rejecting biblical miracles and, thus, Judaism as a whole (Mansour 2019, 83–106). But on the other hand, if religion and reason are posited as two entirely separate orders, the man of faith risks accepting as legitimate all religious dogmas, whatever they may be (Lasker 1980, 297, 300). To prevent such a dilemma, R. Eliah Delmedigo starts from Maimonides' distinction between logical impossibility and factual or natural impossibility (Maimonides 1977, I:73, 141–146). He distinguishes between impossibilities that are of an essential order (*nimn'aot qayyamot be'eçem*) and those that are impossible only in the natural realm (*'eçel ha-tev'a*). If it is logically impossible for the part to be greater than the whole, it is only by reference to the order of nature that the dead can come back to life, or that a person is able to survive forty days without food or drink, is posited as impossible. Unlike the laws of logic, God can, if necessary, modify the nature He has created. In criticizing Christian dogmas, R. Eliah Delmedigo emphasizes that if God has absolute power over the natural order, always being able to derogate from the laws He has set in the universe, the logical impossibility cannot be transgressed. To the extent that God has given man the rational ability to distinguish between true and false, He cannot require him to accept logically contradictory notions concerning the divinity itself. The religious man must not adhere to principles that offend reason,

3 Spinoza owned R. Eliah Delmedigo's work in the abridged version, published by his great-grandson, R. Yosef Shlomo Delmedigo, (J. S. Delmedigo 1629). It seems that Spinoza came to know Averroism through the reading of this work (Fraenkel et al. 2003, 34).

4 R. Eliah Delmedigo noted, however, in unpublished manuscripts, that certain views of the Torah cannot be accepted from a philosophical point of view when they come to oppose Aristotelianism (Bland 1995, 6).

and in general, what is illogical never serves true faith. R. Eliah Delmedigo adds that a religion, which would imply the belief in irrational dogmas, could in no way lead its followers to accept them willingly (E. Delmedigo 1984, 26–27). Thus, he left no room for the maxim, controversially attributed to Tertullian (155–220), *Credo quia absurdum* (Harrison 2017, 350–364). Generally speaking, if reason is not able to prove the truth of a religion, it can, on the other hand, show its falsity (Lasker 1980, 304).

Maimonidean epistemology was thus transformed under the influence of Jewish philosophers of Averroist obedience. It should be noted, however, that Averroism first expressed, for the Jews, more a general interest in Aristotelianism interpreted by Averroes, than a rigid school of thought. In this sense, there was no Jewish Averroism properly so-called, developed in the form of an elaborate doctrine (Ben-Shalom 2002, 173). While the term Averroism could be applied to a group of eclectic Jewish thinkers from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries, studying the theories of both Aristotle and Maimonides, Jews generally avoided getting involved in scholastic feuds over Latin Averroism (Ivry 1999, 196–198), as the example of R. Eliah Delmedigo shows (Engel 2017, 121). These controversies focused, in particular, on the questions of monopsychism and double truth, which had been similarly condemned by Thomas Aquinas and Gilles of Rome (De Libera 1998, 71–89).

Harry A. Wolfson distinguished the doctrine of the double truth from that of the double faith, the former being of an epistemological order and the latter of a religious order. However, it seems that they have a common denominator, which concerns the distinction of heterogeneous domains that they allow to be preserved simultaneously. In this sense, Wolfson counts Averroes among the defenders of the double faith, one based on the conviction of the heart and the other whose belief is established by reason and demonstrations (Wolfson 1942, 243–246). But in any case, the truth established by belief cannot be opposed to that produced by reason, inasmuch as truth cannot contradict truth (Rehman 1921, 26).

R. Itshaq Albalag seems to have been the first Jewish philosopher to have openly adopted the Averroist conception of the double truth, with the aim, which was taken up by Spinoza, of being able to free philosophical reflection from any dependence on Revelation (Guttmann 1976, 277). R. Itshaq Albalag thus sought to promote the distinction between *via rationis* and *via prophetica* (Vajda and Albalag 1960, 251–252; Manzini 2009, 210), emphasizing that rational human knowledge proceeds from a methodology that is the opposite of that which commands prophetic knowledge. The first goes from the effects to their cause, while the second, in a mode that Spinoza would claim, aims to grasp the causes in order to then determine their effects (Vadja 1973, 67, Spinoza 1925, II, 8). Innovating an idea that would be taken up by the author of the *Ethics*, R. Itshaq Albalag conceived of the double

truth, not as a juxtaposition between two heterogeneous domains, but as a distinction between what the vulgar must believe, from a religious point of view, for the sake of social cohesion, and philosophical truth itself (Touati 1962, 35–47; Guttmann 1945, 84–86; Motzkin 1987, 7–19; Sadik 2017, 138). This notion of double truth was thus intended to enable maintaining the faith of the people by strengthening social and political cohesion, and to teach the philosopher scientific truth (Sadik 2014, 430; Spinoza 1925, III, 177; Guttmann 1945, 85; Zac 1959, 56–70).[5] Following R. Itshaq Albalag, R. Nissim of Marseilles (early fourteenth century) also specified that the traditional conception of prophecy concerns the rules of conduct (*nimusym*) and social or international utility (*leto'elet klal 'umah 'o 'umot*) (Kreisel 2000, 179), thus expressing a political and pedagogical necessity (Kreisel 2015, 180). R. Nissim's of Marseilles'contemporary, R. Yitshaq Pulgar (or Pulgar, first half of the fourteenth century), also stressed the need to distinguish between the role of the philosopher, who perceives the agent intellect through his own intellect (*sekel*), and that of the prophet, who activates his imaginative power (*koah ha-medameh*) (Pulgar 1906, 13). Generally speaking, it is advisable to "hide from the masses" (*lehastyr mehamon ha-'am*) the knowledge accumulated by the sages (Pulgar 1906, 25–26). Shlomo Pines has shown that there is a convergence of views between R. Itshaq Pulgar and Spinoza, in particular concerning the separation between philosophy and religion, which was then limited to the moral and political domain, and devoid of any cognitive dimension (Pines 1986, 395–457).

We should also mention the influence of Averroes on Karaites, such as 'Aharon ben 'Elyah of Nicomedes (1300–1369), who affirmed that the soul exists only through its union with the body and that it disappears when the body perishes. He specified that the purely intellectual element of the soul remains imperishable (Renan 1866, 195; Feiner 2010, 14). This is precisely what Spinoza would affirm, three centuries later, that there remains (of the spirit) "something that is eternal" (*aliquid remanet, quod aeternum est*) (Spinoza 1925, V, 23, G. II, 564). Eternity can only concern the spirit, belonging to the thought attribute, and not the individual soul (Hampshire 1951, 175).

It should be noted that there was a consensus among Arab and Jewish philosophers in the Middle Ages that philosophical truths in no way contradict prophetic truth, because their differences essentially concern their forms of exposition and not their contents (Hayoun 1992, 20; Sadik 2015, 154–174). Most Jewish philosophers of the late Middle Ages accepted the Aristotelian distinction, taken up by Averroes, between the demonstrative

5 As Julius Guttmann noted, the double truth distinction prefigures the one proposed by Spinoza, between "true dogmas" (*vera dogmata*) and "pious dogmas" (*pia dogmata*) (Spinoza 1925, G.III, 176; Guttmann 1945, 85). It also leads to what Sylvain Zac has described as the "morality of the vulgar", intended to reinforce obedience to the laws of the sovereign, as opposed to the "morality of the Wise", itself independent of any relative morality, and situated "beyond good and evil" (Zac 1959, 56–70)

truths of philosophy and the dialectical truths of religion (Aristotle 1935, 188). However, they have always been careful to relativize the role of reason, which they have never elevated to the title of the ultimate criterion that can judge religious truths (Montada 2013, 157).

While Maimonides aimed to strengthen the unity of religion and reason, post-Maimonidean Jewish thinkers strongly influenced by Averroism, while maintaining the essential tenets of the Jewish faith, would come to regard the theological and philosophical domains as separate and not to interfere with each other (Ivry 1999, 198; Spinoza 1925, G.III, 176). In such a distinction, we have been able to identify the genesis of the modern separation between political rationality, which will be secularized by expressing itself in the world, and transcendent truth, which must remain interior and subjective (Trigano 1995, 146–147). It should also be noted that under the combined influence of the super-commentators of the writings of R. Abraham Ibn Ezra and the works of Averroes, a stream of Jewish thought including R. Abraham Bibago, R. Baruch Ibn Ya'ish, R. Abraham Shalom, R. Eli Habillo, and R. Judah Messer Leon, has aligned itself with the doctrines and methods of contemporary Latin Scholasticism. which in fact represented more a Jewish Aristotelianism than an anti-religious movement of Averroist obedience (Zonta 2006, 23–25).

Moreover, theological debates between Jews and Christians often focused on Averroist themes (Lasker 1980, 294–304). With the emergence of Marranism, writings with an Averroist tendency were interpreted from both an antinomian and (Y. Kaplan 2004, 28–29) a skeptical perspective (Révah 1958, 179–180).

As Hannah Kasher has pointed out, the transition between Maimonides and Spinoza was facilitated by the Jewish thinkers who follow Averroism (Kasher 2018). Spinoza was apparently familiar with the writings of Averroes (Fraenkel 2013, 214–215).

Spinoza, an Averroist philosopher?

While proceeding from being what Yirmiyahu Yovel called the "*Marrano of Reason*" (Yovel 1989), Spinoza avoided the epistemological stage of skepticism, in the name of certainty (Spinoza 1925, V. 38–40, § 47–48; Viljanen 2020, 130–142), because "who has a true idea, at the same time knows that he has a true idea and he cannot doubt the truth of the thing (*nec de rei veritate potest dubitare*) (Spinoza 1925, G. II, 184, II, 43). This is why Spinoza claimed to have "an idea of God as clear as the triangle (*de Deo tam claram, quam de triangulo habeam ideam*), without, however, having such a clear "image (*imagem*)" (Spinoza 1925, G. IV, 261). This statement is thus contrary to that of Maimonides, for whom it is "by no means in the power of man to grasp and attain the knowledge of the Creator (*'eyn koaḥ be'adam lehasyg we-limço' da'ato shel bore'*)," and he quotes in support of

his thesis the verse of *Isaiah* 55:8: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, and your ways are not my ways (*ky l'o mahshvotay mahshevotykem, wel'o darkykem derakay*) (Maimonides 1987, *Hilkot Teshuvah* V:5; Maimonides 1977, III, 20, 320; Kasher 2018, 218; Luzzatto 1913, 1:198–222). In this sense, Leo Strauss summarized the opposition between Maimonides and Spinoza, concerning the nature of man's knowledge: "Human inadequacy versus human adequacy (L. Strauss 1982, 159). If we can speak of an Averroism of Spinoza, it seems to have been forged mainly by the Italian interpretation of Averroes, subsequent to that of R. Eliah Delmedigo (Alami 2012, 289–298). It should be remembered that Spinoza, who has been described as a Latin Averroist (Toth 2020, 281–309), had it seems, himself insisted that Johannes Bouwmeester translate into Dutch the work *Hayy ben Yaqdhan,* written by Averroes' master Ibn Tufayl (1105–1185) (Ibn Tufayl 1900; Kruk 1987, 364), and commented on by R. Moses Narboni in 1344 (Ben-Zaken 2010, 44). This work sought to show that reason alone, and not Revelation, allows access to divine truth. It also prefigured the Spinozist notions of substance, attribute and mode (Hawi 1975, 66).

Let us recall that, in the *Short Treaty*, Spinoza opposes true belief (*waar geloof*) to belief (*geloof*) in the sense of opinion (*waan*) (Spinoza 1925, G. 1, 54–55, G. I, 77). In *Ethics*, on the one hand, belief is at the service of illusion, concerning in particular natural finalism by which men see a "reason to believe (*causam credenti*)," that allows them to reverse the natural order (Spinoza 1925, G. II, 82). But on the other hand, Spinoza values belief or mutual trust (*fidem invicem*) between men (Spinoza 1925, G. II, 438, IV, 37). The *Theologico-Political Treatise* defines, for the political and moral purpose of universal religion, seven dogmas of faith or belief. They do not expressly require to be true (*non expresse exigit vera*), but only to be necessary for obedience (*obedientiam necessaria sunt*) (Spinoza 1925, G. III, 176).

Concerning Scripture, Spinoza denounces both the dogmatists, to whom he seems to attach Maimonides, who wanted to adapt Scripture to reason, and the skeptics, demanding that reason be adapted to Scripture. He also points out that all these disputes are only the consequence of the lack of a radical distinction between philosophy and theology (Spinoza 1925, G. III, 180). While rejecting such a separation, Maimonides nevertheless defined degrees of certainty in religious faith (Y. Stern 2013, 5; L. Kaplan 2018, 67–85). Concerning miracles, he notes that they are "certain only to the one who has seen them, but to posterity the account becomes a mere tradition, and, for the one who hears it, it is easy to refute them" (Maimonides 1977, III, 50). He links these degrees of knowledge to the prophetic vision always announcing beforehand the miracle to occur, which, therefore cannot appear as a fortuitous event (Maimonides 1977, II, 42). Maimonides points out, however, that the miracle always remains attached to a particular historical event, whereas Revelation is itself universal. Spinoza will take up this remark of Maimonides but he denies any value to the notion of miracle, apart from

its social function (Rozenberg 2023, 391–414). The miracle never allows us to form a "sensible concept of God" (*Deo sanum conceptum formare*), nor to "clearly teach his Providence" (*nec Dei providentiam clare docere*) (Spinoza 1925, G. III, 87–88; Harvey 2013, 664).

However, Spinoza omits the rest of Maimonides' remark, stating that the people did not trust Moses because of the miracles he performed, according to the needs of the moment, but only after the Revelation of Sinai, although its contents were transmitted in its entirety only to Moses (Maimonides 1977, II, 33). Miracles only attested to his prophetic mission. Isolated from the prophetic experience, the miracle represents only a sign of imperfection (*dofy*). Thus, the text of *Deuteronomy* XIII, 2–4 warned that if a prophet, while performing manifest miracles, proposed to abolish the Law of Moses, then he would be considered a false prophet, and should be dealt with accordingly (Maimonides 1987, *Hilkot Yesodey ha-Torah* VIII:1–3). Maimonides specifies that the vision of the true prophet is real, certain and unmistakable (Maimonides 1977, III, 24). In this sense, even if there seems to be a convergence of views between Maimonides and Spinoza, on what the latter calls "the intellectual love of the spirit towards God" (*Mentis amor intellectualis erga Deum*) (Spinoza 1925, G.II, 579–580, V, 36), Maimonides seeks to go beyond the properly philosophical level of the relationship to the divine, in order to reach prophecy itself. He specifies that the degree of the prophets (*dargat ha-nevy'iym*) can only be attained after man has perfected himself in the study of metaphysics, and then direct his thought to the knowledge of God alone, exploring His creatures in order to draw evidence of His existence, perceiving how He directs (*hanagato*) the world (Maimonides 1977, III, 51; Manekin 2012, 82). On the contrary, for Spinoza, prophecy is purely imaginary (Spinoza 1925, G.III 31–32). If he retains the notion of Providence (*Voorzienigheid*), both general and particular, it is only after having emptied these terms of all religious content, the first concerning the laws of nature alone, and the second the effort of each person to maintain his own being (Spinoza 1925, G. I, 40).

This article has sought to analyze the question of the relationship between Reason and Revelation, starting from their formulation by medieval Christian, Muslim and Jewish philosophers, according to different modalities. I then recalled their consensus to affirm the harmony between reason and religion. I have examined the theses of Al-Fārābī, Avicenna, and Maimonides, emphasizing the importance of post-Maimonidean Jewish philosophers influenced by Averroism. I have thus examined the use that R. Itshaq Albalag and R. Itshaq Pulgar, among others, have made of the notion of double truth. Finally, I have underlined the influence that these authors may have had on Spinoza, noting his particular interest in the work *Hayy ben Yaqdhan,* written by Averroes' master Ibn Tufayl. This analysis then made it possible to clarify the opposing conceptions of Maimonides and Spinoza concerning the notions of Reason and Revelation.

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